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J. WILLIAM WHITE

J. WILLIAM WHITE, M.D., PH.D., LL.D. (Aberdeen), late emeritus professor of surgery, and trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, was born in Philadelphia, November 2, 1850, and died at his home in that city, April 24, 1916, after an illness of several months.

He was descended from the Reverend Henry White, who came from England in 1649 and settled in Virginia. Four later generations lived in North Carolina. James White of the fifth generation moved to Burlington, New Jersey. A son married Mary Stockton, a descendant of Richard Stockton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Dr. White's father came from this union. His mother was connected with the well-known New England families of Dowse, Hunt, Isbell, and Griswold.

Having attended the public schools and a private school in his native city, Dr. White entered the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania and graduated in 1871, and at the same time received the degree of doctor of philosophy, having taken the course leading to this degree simultaneously with his medical studies.

In the autumn of that year he accepted an invitation to join the scientific expedition headed by Professor Agassiz, sailing on the U. S. S. Hassler from Boston, December 4. The stops made included the West Indies, the Strait of Magellan, both coasts of South America, Juan Fernandez Islands, the Galapagos Archipelago, Panama, and Mexico; the expedition terminating at San Francisco in August, 1872.

On Dr. White's return to Philadelphia, he served as resident physician in the Philadelphia Hospital, and subsequently filled a similar position in the Eastern Penitentiary.

His connection with the University of Pennsylvania began in 1876, when he became an assistant on the surgical staff. Two years later he was appointed lecturer on venereal diseases and was placed in charge of this department of the out-patient service. In the early 80's he became assistant to Dr. D. Hayes Agnew, professor of surgery in the University of Pennsylvania, an association that continued with the greatest cordiality and satisfaction to both, until Dr. Agnew resigned on account of advancing years. In 1886 he was given the title

of clinical professor of genito-urinary diseases. In 1889 he was elected to the chair of clinical surgery; and in 1900 was advanced to the position of professor of surgery.

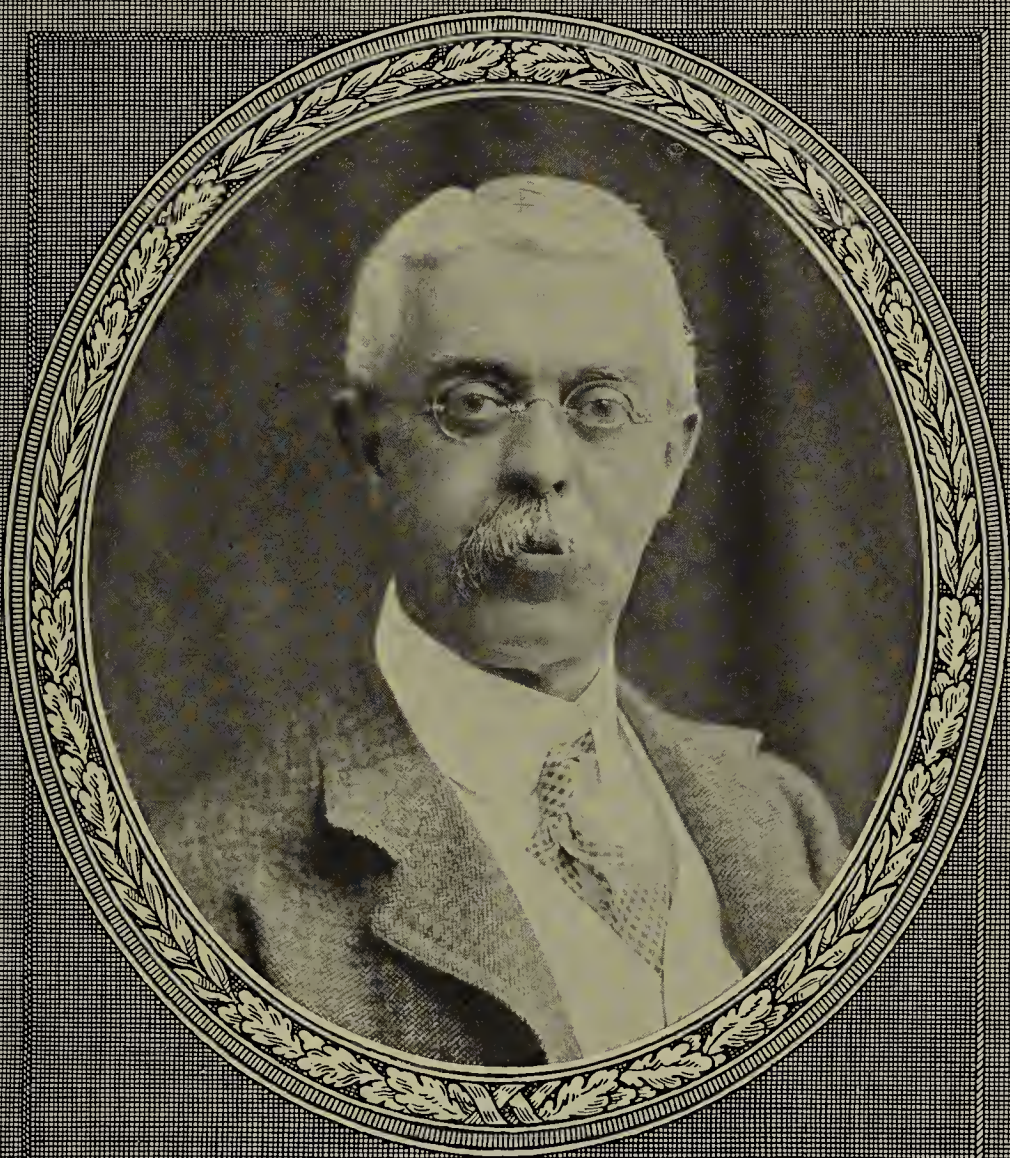
In 1906, Dr. White received the degree of doctor of laws, from the University of Aberdeen on the occasion of the celebration of its four-hundredth anniversary, and was chosen as the spokesman to present the felicitations of all of the American universities.

His contributions to medical literature were frequent, and were conspicuous as examples of clear thinking and forceful presentation. He was joint translator and editor of *Cornil on Syphilis* (Simes & White), 1875; joint editor of the *American Text Book of Surgery* (Keen & White), 1896; joint author of *Genito-Urinary Surgery* (White & Martin), 1897; collaborator to Piersol's *Human Anatomy*, 1907, and to a number of other textbooks. Among his contributions to medical journals may be mentioned: "Hereditary Syphilis," "Dislocation of the Tendon of the Long Head of the Biceps Muscle," "Iodide of Potassium in Syphilis," "The Surgery of the Spine," "The Present Position of Antiseptic Surgery," "The Supposed Curative Effects of Operations *Per Se*," "The Modern Treatment of Vesical Calculus in Male Children," "The Treatment of Glandular Tumors of the Neck," "Tumors of the Female Breast," "The Abortive Treatment of Syphilis," "The Topical Treatment of Focal Epilepsy," "The Roentgen-Rays in Surgery," "The Surgery of the Hypertrophied Prostate," "The Treatment of Delayed Union and Ununited Fracture," "The Diagnosis and Treatment of Appendicitis," "The Value of Early Operations in New Growths," "The Surgical Affections of the Kidneys," etc., and also a memoir of Dr. D. Hayes Agnew, and numerous addresses.

Although Dr. White resigned the professorship of surgery in the University of Pennsylvania on January 1, 1911, and retired from practice, his activities were not diminished, but were turned in other directions. He was made emeritus professor of surgery, and elected to the board of trustees of the University, in which position he served his Alma Mater with untiring zeal until his death.

In the board of managers of the University Hospital, of which he was a member, and in the athletic association of the University, he exercised a dominating influence. He was equally active as a member of the board of commissioners of Fairmount Park, of the board of managers of a large saving fund society, and in many other useful public movements.

Dr. White was endowed with unusual vitality and an inexhaustible energy. He was deeply interested in physical education and inaugurated this department in the University of Pennsylvania in 1884, becoming the first professor of this subject. He was also an ardent advocate of out-of-door exercises. In his earlier years he was a very active and enthusiastic devotee of sparring, swimming, rowing, steeplechasing, and bicycling. In his more mature years he found an outlet



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for his energy in golf and mountain-climbing; and was a member of both the Swiss and American Alpine Clubs. However, he never allowed these diversions to interfere with a faithful attention to his patients, or to his hospital or teaching duties.

In the faculty of the Medical School of the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. White was a source of great strength. His teaching was noted for its soundness, clearness, and force. He held the interest and attention of his classes, to an unusual degree, and enjoyed in the largest measure the confidence and respect of the students. His keen and discriminating judgment was recognized by his colleagues and by the students, both of whom constantly sought his advice and counsel.

Although busily occupied in his profession, he gave freely of his time to public affairs. His overflowing energy and his powerful influence were always employed as constructive forces. He never criticized unless he had an alternative to offer that he considered an improvement. He did not pull down, except for the purpose of building a better structure. Uncompromising as an enemy, he was the staunchest and most loyal of friends, not one of whom, it may safely be said, ever appealed to him for help in vain.

When the World War broke out in 1914, Dr. White's interest in the cause of the Allies was at once aroused.

As Dr. White's biographer truly says, "Individual neutrality was to Dr. White a form of mental and moral cowardice. He held that no rational being has a right to plead ignorance, when knowledge is attainable, or to be indifferent to matters of right and wrong." In an effort to obtain knowledge in this matter, he at once began scanning the very voluminous literature put out by the warring nations, as well as that from other sources, that appeared to be reliable. The conflicting statements observed in this study seemed to be covered by twelve fundamental questions which he set down and proceeded to answer in order that he might himself reach reasonable conclusions. Those who had the privilege of reading this manuscript, urged Dr. White to publish the material in order that it might have a wider reading. This he did in December, 1914, under the title of *A Primer of the War for Americans*. So concisely and so authoritatively was the subject covered that the demand speedily exhausted three editions, and it was also translated in a number of foreign languages.

This was followed by *Germany and Democracy*, and later by a *Text Book of the War for Americans*, a volume of 500 pages, which appeared in May, 1915.

In this volume he included the matter contained in the pamphlet, and added such other important information as had accumulated in the interval between the two publications. This reference would scarcely be complete without adding that the proceeds of the sale of the pamphlet were given to the Belgium Relief Fund.

The final act of Dr. White's busy life was the organization of the University of Pennsylvania Unit of the American Ambulance Hospital, in Paris, which he accompanied to its post of duty in June, 1915, and he personally raised the money necessary to equip and transport the unit. It was during this trip that the first sign appeared of what proved to be a fatal illness.

A successful practitioner of surgery, an impressive writer, a teacher of the first rank, a public spirited citizen, filling many posts of responsibility and of honor, a wise counselor to a host of friends who depended on him in all emergencies, Dr. White exerted an influence in his community such as is rarely commanded by a single individual.

ALFRED C. WOOD.